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## LOST IN TRANSLATION? MEASURING AND ARTICULATING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT GAINS IN OUTDOOR LEARNING.

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While interest in outdoor learning continues to grow, most policy documents (e.g. Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland) offer little pedagogical direction to teachers about how these experiences might authentically happen. Further, there is concern that reducing personal and social development (PSD) - a central aim of outdoor learning - to measurable gains will negate the authenticity of outdoor learning experiences. We believe this fear is somewhat misplaced, and contend that the research, policy-making, and practicing communities should search out conceptually and methodologically how outdoor experiences which generate authentic records of achievement can develop in ways that are beneficial in assessment and student learning terms. In conceptually pursuing this central task, we turned to Dewey and Aristotle. Dewey's framework sought to value both student learning as process (continuity), and the educator's role connecting curricular goals to the student's present understanding of the world (interaction). Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature directing educator's interest in PSD towards Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). In this context, PSD is most usefully understood as the student's increasing ability to apply practical reasoning, individually and in social settings; making wise personal judgements as well as positively contributing to group deliberation and decision-making. In such light, measuring PSD gains requires educators to see students' whole experience as on-going assessment. Methodologically however we recognize that utilizing language in a way that balances curricular goals against the flexibility necessary for engaging student's in experiential learning can often result in over emphasizing skill development to the detriment of the achievement of a fuller range of outcomes. We therefore, in preliminary fashion, sketch out how a greater transfer of learning might plausibly develop when teachers are able to function effectively as a co-learner or co-constructor through engaging in discussions of tasks, negotiating solutions and encouraging students to express their views (Thomas, 2008). Thereafter, we begin to tease out how assessment can reflect a situational and phenomenological informed first person perspective on learning where multiple outcomes can be assessed holistically. We argue that such a perspective contains the methodological basis for integrating experiences (thoughts, perceptions, feelings) with associated knowledge meanings to achieve learning outcomes in ways which enables students to show evidence of discernment, deliberation and effective decision-making.

### References

Thomas, G. (2008) Preparing facilitators for experiential education: the role of intentionality and intuition, *Journal of Adventure Education & Outdoor Learning*, 8 (1) 3-20.